



Parenting

# Learning to learn *The Role of parents*

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All kids are born with an inherent skill encoded in their genetic make up, that is brought out and developed during the course of 'growing up'. Modern theories of education lay great importance on a child's free exploration and advocate experiential learning. Parental involvement in the learning process of their children is highly significant. Educationists like Bruner and Vygostky posited that learning occurs in a socio-cultural context in which adults and primary caregivers support or 'scaffold' young children to higher levels of thinking and acting. According to this view, children who experience sensitive, cognitively stimulating home environments early in development are at an advantage in the learning process.

The young of all living beings bear similarities. Whether it is a tiger cub struggling to catch its tail or a puppy rolling over a ball or a human child engrossed in sand play, all have a natural instinct to explore, born out of curiosity to know their surroundings. Rousseau's 'Emile' grew up in a free natural environment away from the 'corrupt-

ing influence' of the society guided by only one teacher. Modern education focuses much on the impact of positive societal intervention on the child's learning behaviour. It suggests an equal parallel role for parents and the school.

It has been observed that children who have received early and sustained parental intervention show –

- \* Higher scores, greater academic achievements
- \* Increased motivation, better self-esteem
- \* Better school attendance
- \* Emotionally stable behaviour

#### Importance of daily family routine:

Routine activities provide children with world knowledge: interpreting other's behaviour and language, anticipating and sequencing of events and drawing inferences from new experiences. The learning response is affected by the frequency of a child's participation in these activities. Young children feel secure and more confident when they are set up in a routine – time to go to bed, play, study and food. This confidence arises due to familiarity of the outcome. Imbibing



## Parent-child-school interface: A positive approach

WT spoke to some representatives of the school and PTA at Doha English Speaking School (DESS) to understand their approach to this interaction:

**According to a spokesperson at DESS,** "Young minds are impressionable. The learning behaviour, cognitive and attitudinal/psychological development in children are influenced by the behaviours, articulation and successes of their adults. PTA aims to be a community engaged in building up this social capacity in order to enhance student learning."

### PTA: Partnership Through Action

PTA at DESS organises fund-raising projects like

Festive Fair, Pizza Days; that involve extensive participation of the parents, students, the school staff and board members. Children get involved along with their adults-parents and teachers during the course of organising and executing these projects. Rich discussions are generated, thus adding up to

the learning experiences of the child.

The fund raised through such activities is again utilised for providing learning resources to the students – books, 'jubilee garden', and cookery room, improving the multipurpose hall, upgrading the TT room, environmental garden etc.

PTA also organises 'coffee

mornings' where parents interact with teachers in a comfortable informal setting. The whole idea is to develop the parent-child-school interaction into a trusting, relaxed, open relationship where the child feels safe, thus creating an environment conducive to learning.



From left to right: Christine Marnoch (PTA Chairperson), Karen Wilson (Assistant Head teacher), Eddie Liptrot (Head teacher), Siân Casson (PTA Treasurer).

activities like shared book reading, solving jigsaws and puzzles, playing board games and story telling in the daily routine, act to enhance learning.

There are various websites for kids that give subject and age specific simple activities that are enjoyable and can be organised at home. Some of these brainteaser sites are –

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools)

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

[www.sitesforteachers.com](http://www.sitesforteachers.com)

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

Kids need our time and attention. Family activities need not be elaborately planned with expensive ideas. Sometimes simplicity is the key word!

### Quality of parent-child interaction:

Children benefit from exposure to adult speech that is varied and rich in information about the objects and events in the environment. The amount and style of language used by parents have a direct effect on the child's language development skills. Children look up to their parents as role models. Conversing and demonstrating that achievement comes through hard work, modelling the values of learning, self-discipline, brings about the desirable attitudinal changes. As Zig Ziglar quotes in his bestseller *Raising positive kids in a negative world*, "A strong, unified parental team, which

practices loving with mutual respect, has the best shot at positively influencing children for good."

Expressing high but realistic expectations for achievement, setting goals and standards appropriate for the child's age and maturity, recognising and encouraging special talents, telling friends and family about successes help in motivating the child to higher levels of learning.

### Home environment conducive to learning:

Parents can act as facilitators in learning by providing age appropriate learning materials – books, toys, puzzles etc. that boosts child curiosity, exploration and self-discovery. These

have been linked to early academic achievements and later school successes. A kid's room equipped with such resources at reachable heights is likely to attract a child's attention, enabling him to utilise the materials at his or her own pace.

### Meeting grounds:

Parents and education providers should have constant interaction to learn more about the behaviour of the child at school and also to interact with the teachers to enhance student learning. Children whose parents form a strong understanding with the teacher and interact constantly with the school activities always perform better in all activities. ■